



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT *CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL*

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## CITIZENS GUIDE TO SITING COUNCIL PROCEDURES

### PETITION FOR A DECLARATORY RULING WITH A PUBLIC HEARING

#### **1. The Connecticut Siting Council**

The Connecticut Siting Council (Council) consists of nine members from all over the state. Five members are appointed by the Governor and four members are designees of the Senate, the House, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Chairman of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority. At least two members are experienced in ecology and not more than one member has an affiliation, past or present, with any utility or government utility regulatory agency. The Council reviews the need for and placement of cell towers, power plants, power lines and other energy and telecommunications infrastructure, and any significant environmental impacts.

#### **2. Petition for a Declaratory Ruling**

Some electric generating facilities, including, but not limited to, renewable facilities, and any modifications to existing energy facilities are required to be approved by declaratory ruling. The Council develops a schedule when a petition for a declaratory ruling is received. Within sixty (60) days of receipt of a petition for a declaratory ruling, the Council **may** decide to hold a public hearing, but a public hearing is not required by law.

#### **3. Nature of Siting Council Public Hearings**

The Council's proceedings are very different from a local planning and zoning hearing or a town meeting. The Council jurisdiction is limited to hearing applications presented to it; the Council has no planning function. Council proceedings are governed by state statute: specifically, the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act and the Public Utility Environmental Standards Act. This means that the hearing is conducted in a manner similar to a courtroom proceeding. Public hearings must be held in an orderly fashion to ensure the transcriptionist is able to record every word. The Council maintains web pages that contain record materials for each proceeding that is pending before the Council.

#### **4. Participants in Siting Council Public Hearings**

The participants in a Council proceeding on a petition for a declaratory ruling with a public hearing consist of the following:

- a. Petitioner:** The petitioner is the developer proposing to build an electric generating facility at a particular site or a facility owner proposing to modify an existing electric generating facility and is a party in the proceeding. The petitioner files evidence with the Council before the hearing and presents witnesses at the hearing for questioning by the Council and other participants in the proceeding. Questions from the Council and other participants in the hearing are limited to the subject matter that is filed before the hearing. The petitioner may ask questions of other parties and intervenors on evidence that was submitted by those parties and intervenors before the hearing.
- b. Parties and Intervenors:** Parties and intervenors are participants in the proceeding who requested party or intervenor status from the Council and were granted such status. Both parties and intervenors file evidence with the Council before the hearing and present witnesses at the hearing for questioning by the Council and other parties and intervenors in the proceeding. Parties and intervenors may ask questions of the petitioner and other

parties and intervenors on evidence that was submitted by the petitioner and other parties and intervenors before the hearing. Parties and intervenors are not allowed to make their own case by giving oral testimony at the hearing. They must make their case in writing and, in exchange, they may cross-examine the petitioner and other parties and intervenors and their witnesses.

- c. **Limited Appearance Statements:** Limited appearance statements are made by residents and other persons who would like to express their comments and concerns about the proposed electric generating facility site by providing an oral statement during the public comment session of the hearing or by submitting a written statement to the Council before, during or after the hearing. They may not ask questions of the petitioner, parties and intervenors, or the Council. The 6:30 PM public comment session of the hearing is reserved for oral limited appearance statements.

**No person who is a party or intervenor in the proceeding may also make an oral limited appearance statement during the public comment session of the hearing or submit a written limited appearance statement to the Council before, during or after the hearing.**

The Council requests that oral limited appearance statements are brief in order to ensure all concerned persons have an opportunity express their concerns at the hearing. Oral limited appearance statements must be spoken into the microphone to be acknowledged by the Council and to be part of the transcript of the hearing.

## **5. Council Review of Petitions for Declaratory Rulings**

Companies present the Council with a petition for a declaratory ruling for construction of a new electric generating facility or for modifications to an existing energy facility site. The Council does not select sites for electric generating facilities that are not proposed by the petitioner. Also, the Council does not have powers of eminent domain. This means that the Council may not take property from a private owner for the purpose of siting an electric generating facility there.

The petitioner has the burden of proving to the Council that construction and operation of the proposed facility at the site selected would not result in a significant adverse environmental impact.

The role of the Council is to review the petitioner's evidence of environmental impact for the selected site.

After balancing the public benefit against the environmental impact, the Council makes a decision to approve or deny the proposed site, or to approve the site with modifications and to approve or deny modifications to existing sites, or to approve modifications to existing sites with modifications. The decision is made at a Council meeting held at least 30 days after any public hearings. Council meetings are typically held at the Council's office, and all agendas are publicly noticed.